

“Obstacles to Godliness, Part 3” - 2 Corinthians 7:8-16 – November 6th, 2016

- Today's teaching is part three of a series I've titled, "Obstacles to Godliness."
 - Here in the remainder of the chapter the Apostle Paul continues expressing how encouraged he is by the Corinthian Christians.
 - This because, they had godly sorrow resulting in genuine repentance and it was due to a willingness to receive Paul's rebuke.
- As we saw last week, there is this common denominator in everything Paul writes them concerning their prior unwillingness.
 - In Paul's first epistle, he had to write them very bluntly because of their unwillingness and obstinance towards Paul's rebuke.
 - It's for this reason that Paul had to make it abundantly clear in no uncertain terms that which becomes an obstacle to godliness.
- 1. An unwillingness to live spiritually pure lives (Verse 1)**
- Paul says we must purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.
- 2. An unwillingness to be honest and open (Verses 2-4)**
- Here Paul asks that they open their hearts to him, as he's wronged no one, and though he's spoken bluntly, he's encouraged.
- 3. An unwillingness to be teachable (Verses 5-7)**
- Paul tells them in spite of conflicts and fears, his joy was greater than ever because they expressed deep sorrow and concern.
- 4. An unwillingness to repent (Verses 8-10)**
- v8 Paul says even if he caused them sorrow by his letter he didn't regret it though he did in that he saw it hurt them a little while.
 - v9 He says he's now happy because their sorrow led to repentance as God had intended, and that they weren't harmed by Paul.
 - v10 He then says Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.
- What Paul is saying here is that he initially regretted sending his first letter, but, because they repented, he no longer regrets it.
 - The reason he no longer regretted his blunt rebuke of the Corinthian Christians is because it had brought about a godly sorrow.
 - As such, their godly sorrow led to a genuine repentance, which is the polar opposite of the worldly sorrow that leads to death.
- Of this one commentator wrote, "In sin, the pleasure passeth, the sorrow remaineth; but in repentance, the sorrow passeth, the pleasure abideth for ever. God soon poureth the oil of gladness into broken hearts."
- G. Campbell Morgan of this sorrow wrote, "Repentance is not sorrow only. It may be unaccompanied by sorrow ... at the time, but sorrow will always follow, sorrow for the past; but this change of mind is the great thing."
- I like the contrast that Pastor Chuck pointed out, "Sorrow alone accomplishes nothing. Peter was sorry he denied Christ, and he repented. Judas was sorry he betrayed Christ but, instead of repenting, he killed himself."
- Alan Redpath of the true repentance writes, "Godly sorrow that leads to repentance, therefore, is a sorrow that leads to a change of purpose, of intention, and of action. It is not the sorrow of idle tears; it is not crying by your bedside because once again you have failed; nor is it vain regret, wishing things had never happened, wishing you could live the moments again. No, it is not that. It is a change of purpose and intentions, a change of direction and action."
- 5. An unwillingness to right wrongs (Verses 11-13)**
- v11 Paul says this godly sorrow has produced earnestness, eagerness, and a righteous indignation to see that justice is done.
 - v12 He tells them that even though he wrote them, it wasn't on account of the one who did wrong, but rather that it was for them.
 - v13 He says by this they were encouraged, and were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was by their refreshing him.
- It's believed that what Paul is referring to here has to do with the sin of sexual immorality he had confronted them on previously.
 - More specifically, his first epistle where he rebukes the Corinthian church for accepting a man in sexual sin with his stepmother.
 - It seems that they did what was right and kicked him out of the church as Paul had told them, which led to this man repenting.
- 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 (NIV) — 1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? 3 For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. 4 So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord.
- 6. An unwillingness to fear the Lord (Verses 14-16)**
- v14 Paul says he had boasted to him about them and they didn't embarrass him, but that everything he said was proved true.
 - v15 He says his affection for them is all the greater when he remembers their obedience, receiving him with fear and trembling.
 - v16 Paul then goes on to express his gladness, such that, he can now have complete confidence in the Corinthian Christians.
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the greatest hindrances to living a godly Christian life, this would have to be it.
 - Namely, that of having no fear of God, which as the Proverbs say is the beginning of wisdom, and fearing God is to hate evil.
 - I'll close with this simple, yet introspective question, "What obstacles in my life have become a hindrance to living a godly life?"